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## COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE: A SEARCH FOR TOMORROW

BY

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and  
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COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE:  
A SEARCH FOR TOMORROW

A GROUP STUDY PROJECT

by

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## ABSTRACT

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Combat search and rescue (CSAR) was born during World War II as attempts to rescue airmen returning from bombing raids in Germany proved viable. In every war since then rescue forces have proven invaluable as they have saved thousands of American lives. The problem has always been the manning and training of rescue forces after the completion of a conflict. Attempts to increase the force structure and the budget have routinely failed due to a lack of interest in peacetime search and rescue and failure to document the capability in wartime. Following the U.S. return from Vietnam the Aerial rescue Service (ARS) was mission capable. During the subsequent draw-down of the services it was again gutted. Its nadir was recently when it could not meet the requirements for deployment to Desert Storm. The problems include a lack of force structure and training. Additionally, many of the assets are in the reserve component and are very difficult to deploy on short notice. Most modernized rescue assets have been transferred to the Special Operations Command, including the HH-53 helicopters and the HC-130 refuelers. This command currently has the capability to perform CSAR, but not the mission. The Air Staff has recommended four options to solve the problems of rescue in the future. The authors have recommended a fifth option that would transfer command of the ARS from Military Airlift Command and align it with the Air Combat Command, the principal user.

## INTRODUCTION

On Easter Sunday, 2 April, 1972 LTC Iceal "Gene" Hambleton's EB-66 aircraft was knocked from the sky by a North Vietnamese surface to air missile and the greatest Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR) effort every undertaken began. The rescue of this 53 year old navigator, known by the famous call sign "Bat 21", would stretch the CSAR system to its limits and eventually involve every service at an extraordinary cost.<sup>1</sup> Before the rescue was accomplished, the result of an incredible effort by a Navy SEAL that infiltrated and extracted Bat 21 by sampan, over 800 strike and rescue sorties would be launched. Eight aircraft were destroyed and four were seriously damaged in the effort.

In all 17 U.S. servicemen lost their lives in the Bat 21 rescue, a huge price to pay for saving one aviator.<sup>2</sup> Losses of this magnitude would play heavily in the future, as choices were made to downgrade the size and capability of the Aerial Rescue Service (ARS), as the lethality of the modern battlefield increased and their survivability came into question.

Hambleton was rescued because the CSAR force was well organized, equipped and trained. Today there are questions as to whether that same capability exists. Support for the Air Force's rescue capability has been erratic throughout history but the lowest point had to be when dedicated rescue forces were not deployed during Operation Desert Shield/Storm. The problem seems clear. Responsibility for the rescue of downed

airmen rests today in the Aerial Rescue Service but the only real capability is located with the special operating forces (SOF). In 1985 the warfighting CINC's were convinced that the future battlefield was too lethal for the traditional quick reaction, stand-by, type CSAR.<sup>3</sup> All CSAR missions on this new battlefield would in effect be special operations. This vision gave credence to the transfer of assets from the ARS to the special operating forces. This, in concert with the recent stand up of the United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), and the reorganization of the Air Force has clouded the CSAR issue even further. Parochialism, the lack of funding, and a constant refocusing of priorities have continually plagued the ARS. As a result of this turmoil, the Special Operations Command, and others, have requested the service schools to initiate student research projects to focus on the dilemma of CSAR. This paper will address the issue in the following manner:

1. How CSAR got where it is today (a short history of CSAR).
2. A brief statement of the problem.
3. What the current doctrine says.
4. The American public and CSAR
5. After Action Issues.
6. Air Staff Options.
7. Pros and Cons of the Air Staff Options.
8. Air Combat Command Option.

## THE HISTORY OF THE AERIAL RESCUE SERVICE

The ability to rescue downed airman came to the forefront in World War II. Originally conceived by the belligerents as a requirement to rescue airmen that were shot down at sea, CSAR was limited to assets, mostly boats and planes, that could locate and rescue survivors in the water. It was not until the technology of helicopters advanced that the capability of actual overland CSAR became realistic.

On 13 March 1946 the Aerial Rescue Headquarters was formed to fill a requirement for worldwide peacetime SAR. In spite of being ill prepared for war, because of a focus on peacetime activities and the lack of adequate equipment and wartime training, the ARS was deployed to the Korean War. It deployed with few assets and an ill defined mission. In spite of the abundance of problems, ARS was able to build a system that allowed hundreds of combat saves and eventually participated in the evacuation of 9898 United Nations personnel at the end of the war. After the war, the ARS was again relegated to the peacetime role of worldwide SAR. Their successes around the world gave birth to the first National Search and Rescue Peacetime plan, written in 1956. In spite of its value the ARS lost priority and during Operation Wring Out, the 1958 drawdown of the Air Force, and the capability of rescue forces severely declined.<sup>4</sup> "By 1960 the ARS was a skeleton command consisting of three squadrons and a mere 1450 personnel."<sup>5</sup> More importantly the Air Force limited the crews to peacetime training requirements and directed that

no special equipment would be purchased for the role.<sup>6</sup>

Following the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution in 1964, rescue forces were again called upon to deploy to Southeast Asia. Two detachments were stationed in Thailand and two were located in South Vietnam. In 1966 the ARS was designated the Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS). In 1967 the ARRS took delivery of the first helicopter specifically designed for the role of CSAR, the HH-53. Throughout the war the doctrine and equipment continued to evolve and the ARRS grew to the pinnacle of its success. By the end of the war they had logged 2780 combat saves and were the most highly decorated aviation unit in the war, including one Medal of Honor recipient among their ranks.<sup>7</sup>

Despite the proven requirement for a viable CSAR capability the years following our return from Southeast Asia were not prosperous. Failure to defend the need for this capability and the continued drawdown of the Air Force again reduced the ARRS to a peacetime SAR and disaster relief force. As the ARRS eagerly awaited the arrival of the HH-53 Pave Low,<sup>8</sup> an advanced helicopter specifically designed for their requirements, the nation was embarrassed by the disaster at Desert One. The failure of special operating forces attempting to rescue American hostages in Iran was caused by the failure of the helicopters in support. Desert One brought new priority to the role of special operations and the Pave Lows were assigned to the 1st Special Operations Wing at Hurlburt Field, Florida to prepare for a



second attempted rescue. The ARRS was again left with its small and aging fleet of aircraft and equipment.

By 1987 the ARRS was again gutted as the preponderance of its aircraft were transferred to the newly formed Special Operations Command.<sup>9</sup> The cancellation of the HH-60 Nighthawk program left the ARRS with a fleet of H-3s and UH-1s that were far from capable of performing CSAR. The H-3s and UH-1s lacked sufficient aircraft survivability equipment, had limited range, limited payload, and were becoming maintenance intensive due to their age. Again the refurbishment of the ARRS had been set back. The Air Force continued to support the transfer of assets to SOF units in an effort to increase the capability of special operations and to secure a larger role for the Air Force in this new and important command. In spite of these setbacks the ARRS continued to operate around the world. The national requirement for a rescue force had not gone away.

Finally, in August 1989 at McClellan AFB, California, the new Aerial Rescue Service headquarters was established. The new headquarters was chartered with organizing and equipping a viable rescue force that will serve the United States into the twenty-first century.<sup>10</sup> While this is a worthwhile goal it is a complex undertaking. As previously mentioned many of the assets are aging and cannot operate at the distances or meet the survivability requirements of today's battlefield. This dilemma is compounded because many of the ARS assets currently reside in the reserve component and are not immediately

available for deployment. For example, during the time-frame of Desert Shield/Desert Storm the force structure for the ARS was limited to:

- Two MH-60G units: One was located at Osan, Korea and the other unit is located at Nellis AFB.

- Three HH-3E units: One located at Kadena, Japan, tasked to support PACAF, one located at Keflavik, Iceland and the third at Patrick, AFB Florida.

- No active duty HC-130 were available. All tankers reside in the reserve component.<sup>11 12</sup>

Desert Storm demonstrated that trained and ready forces of all types must be rapidly deployable to support regional contingencies. Specific units that are critical to execution of the CINC's warplans cannot be located in the reserve component because the bureaucracy may be too cumbersome to allow rapid deployment. Rescue assets may not be critical to the CINC's success but saving American lives is certainly important enough to the American people to have the assets readily available in a wartime scenario.

#### PROBLEM STATEMENT

The U.S. Air Force is designated the DOD proponent agency for Combat Search and Rescue, however the assets that should be dedicated toward accomplishment of this mission were transferred to USSOCOM.<sup>13</sup> SOCOM and the conventional Air Force agree that special operating forces have an inherent mission to rescue

downed aviators. But, the requirement as a supporting CINC, is specifically to perform CSAR in their specific area of operations, within their capabilities. This is the same requirement as any other component.

Peacetime search and rescue as well as combat search and rescue are not primary missions of the forces assigned to USSOCOM.<sup>14</sup> While USSOCOM has a limited CSAR responsibility, it has the personnel and equipment to perform the mission. The personnel do not routinely train to conduct CSAR operations but are prepared to accomplish this mission in support of unilateral training and real world requirements. There are similarities between CSAR and a standard SOF mission and those skills can be quickly transferred but may not be maintained on a day to day basis. Currently, very little SAR training time is allotted in SOF training plans.<sup>15</sup> The additional burden of training for CSAR would detract even further from support requirements. Those who would say the easy solution appears to be a transfer of the mission to special operations, clearly do not understand the magnitude of requirements already placed on SOF aviation forces. Additional taskings would, in fact, overburden SOF and limit their ability to perform their primary role.

While the budget does not allow for a total refurbishment of the ARS without balancing cuts in other Air Force programs, the requirement still exists for a trained and ready CSAR force that can perform SAR in a peacetime and a wartime role. Any solution to the CSAR issue must allow for continued completion of

difficult peacetime SAR requirements. For example, SAR crews provide daily support around the world such as, support of NASA at Patrick AFB Florida, rescue stand-by in Iceland, SAR coverage of the entire PACOM area of operations, and many others. Therefore, the problem has two dimensions. SOF cannot handle the additional requirements of CSAR without increased funding and manning, but the Air Force cannot continue to meet the demands of worldwide rescue of aircrews, without building a trained and ready CSAR force.

#### DOCTRINE

In June 1991 the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) completed a policy level review to discuss issues from Desert Storm. CSAR became the primary issue. Most attendees agreed that Desert Storm had flaws in the CSAR plan but the group did not see these flaws as requiring a roles and missions fix. They found current doctrine as sound.<sup>16</sup> Listed below are several of the basic references that establish CSAR doctrine and assign responsibilities.

Air Force Manual 1-1 states that the Air Force will prepare forces to conduct the specialized task of aerospace rescue and recovery. The Chief of Staff Air Force, as the DOD executive agent for SAR/CSAR assigns command of rescue forces to the commander of Military Airlift Command (MAC). The MAC Commander through the Aerial Rescue Service, is responsible for organizing, training, equipping, sustaining, and providing

operationally ready forces for CSAR operations.

JCS Publication 2 states that each service is responsible for providing forces capable of performing combat search and rescue in support of its operations, in accordance with its assigned functions. Each service will take into account the inherent SAR capabilities of forces assigned with the primary mission of SAR, and the availability of facilities for SAR of the other services.

Joint Publication 3-50.2 addresses SOF and CSAR in the following manner: The theater SOC has some inherent CSAR capability, but this is a collateral mission. SOF equipment is not specifically designed for CSAR, and SOF receives little CSAR specific training. SOF are normally responsible for CSAR of their own forces when operating in environments that require a SOF unique capability. Use of conventional CSAR capability is appropriate in more benign environments. It goes on to say:

- SOF may rescue its own forces when conventional rescue forces are unable to do so due to other taskings or when SOF can perform the mission more efficiently.

- SOC does not normally maintain a fully staffed component rescue coordination center (RCC) such as the Air Force or the Navy, but will maintain a focal point for CSAR operations.

The bottom line in the tasking of SOF for CSAR operations is that doctrinally, they should not be routinely tasked to perform conventional CSAR. Rescue missions flown by SOF are appropriate when the environment requires SOF capabilities and/or the

priority for recovery of isolated personnel is sufficiently high enough to warrant a special operation. SOF and their C2 elements must focus their efforts on special operations. Use of SOF for CSAR may be at the expense of other special operations. For these reasons, the theater SOC should not be assigned overall theater/joint CSAR responsibility, a dual SO/CSAR mission, or be placed on alert to meet short-notice CSAR taskings.

The Air Force Special Operations Command (AFSOC) completed a White Paper on the issue of CSAR in mid-summer 1991, outlining considerations that should be taken into account prior to tasking SOF for CSAR. It indicated:

1. Rescue of a downed aircrew member may be a national priority and the SOF assets are the only ones capable of conducting the rescue.

2. The SOC's must be augmented to form a rescue coordination center. This should be done through AFSOC.

3. Most special operations assets are not trained for combat rescue.<sup>17</sup>

Under specific operational circumstances, SOF may be used for precautionary (short fuze, stand-by) CSAR, but this should only be accomplished as a last resort.<sup>18</sup>

#### CONTROL OF CSAR ASSETS DURING DESERT STORM

USCENTAF had overall rescue responsibility for Operation Desert Storm. They were given coordination authority with all components but initially had no assets from the Aerial Rescue

Service in theater. If rescue forces had deployed they would have been under the operational control of CENTAF. Special operations assets deployed in theater and capable of SAR, consisted of Air Force HH-53 Pave Lows, MH-60G Pave Hawks, Army CH-47 Chinooks, Army MH-60 Blackhawks and MC-130 Combat Talons.

Each component had formed a Rescue Coordination Center (RCC). USCENTAF had operational control of the Joint Rescue Coordination Center (JRCC). The JRCC was given mission coordination authority with all coordination centers including the Multi-national forces. If there are conflicting priorities the coordination center at the Central Command headquarters would deconflict the missions through the authority provided them by the CINC.<sup>19</sup>

The question comes down to why ARS assets were not deployed to Desert Storm? Quite simply the ARS lacked the combat capability in training and equipment to deploy. Additionally, many of the forces required are currently in the reserve component and their activation or deployment was impossible.<sup>20</sup>

The ARS eventually deployed personnel to operate in the JRCC, and the RCC's. In addition, ARS personnel wrote the CSAR plan for Desert Storm, and assisted in its execution.<sup>21</sup>

Overall the use of CSAR forces and their command and control during Desert Storm patterned current doctrine, with the following exceptions:

1. CSAR was placed under control of the SOC. This is not

recommended in JCS publication 3-50.2.

2. No actual CSAR assets were deployed by the ARS.

3. AFSOC became the JRCC.

4. SOF helicopters and tankers that were already in short supply were forced to sit on precautionary alert. These assets became committed to CSAR and would not have been available to meet other SOF requirements.

In spite of doctrinal issues and the failure to deploy ARS assets, the SOCCENT Commander termed CSAR during Desert Storm a great success. The JRCC coordinated the rescue of several pilots that had ejected deep behind enemy lines. Air Force and Army helicopters completed these rescues.

CSAR during Desert Storm uncovered some serious flaws in the capabilities to provide a CINC coverage. Had the CSAR and SOF missions grown to the level that was predicted the system would have not been able to adapt to the multitude of requirements. As with all capabilities in the CINC's area of operations it is only viable if it meets the CINC's requirements. To do this the rescue force must meet the following prescribed criteria:

1. Rescue forces must be organic to the CINC's assigned forces and within the CINC's AOR to facilitate rapid response and force integration.

2. Capable of operating in the same environment as the striking force.

3. Able to perform effectively in joint or combined operations.



4. A well trained and equipped force, rehearsed in all scenario's for operations under the CINC's control.<sup>22</sup>

A force that is not totally dedicated to CSAR/SAR would have difficulty in meeting these criteria.

#### THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND CSAR

Today, twenty years after the U.S. withdrawal from Vietnam the anticipation of finding an American soldier alive in North Vietnam, South Vietnam, or Laos draws immediate attention from the major news networks and magazines. The public instantly reacts to the possibility that an American serviceman may still be interned. For this reason the immediate rescue of an American airman is critical. While it may not be the priority to a CINC, it is to the American public. The American ethic says wars should be fought without friendly casualties or prisoners.

On 10 November 1967 in excess of 100 sorties were launched to an attempt to rescue 1LT Lance Sijan. The attempted rescue lasted for days and eventually used more daily sorties than were being provided to the war itself, in that region. Several airmen, attempting the rescue, were shot down and ended up in the same North Vietnamese prison, with Sijan.<sup>23</sup> What is the cost the United States is prepared to pay for saving the life of an airman? It is a CINC's dilemma.<sup>24</sup>

Aside from the obvious value of capturing a U.S. airman for propaganda and intelligence exploitation our enemies know that the public pressure to end the war will increase immediately upon

the proper manipulation of a POW. The CINC must decide if the advantages are worth the risks.

Department of the Air Force, Air Rescue Pamphlet 2-1 states that USAF combat rescue philosophy dictates maintaining a capability to recover combat aircrews. This philosophy assumes that rescue forces may be placed at risk to recover these downed crew members. Benefits of this rescue capability include, but are not limited to, denying the enemy a potential source of intelligence and propaganda, recovering a valuable combat resource (pilots), and increasing aircrew morale with a resultant increase in motivation and performance.

The hostage crisis in Lebanon, now just finished, was played out on the U.S. public for years. Today few are prepared for a war that will take and display American soldiers in the hands of an aggressive enemy. This, if for no other reason, is the justification for keeping a healthy and capable Aerial Rescue Service. There are those returning POWs that state they didn't expect other Americans to risk their lives to rescue them. The thousands of airmen that were successfully saved will quickly disagree. Admiral Jeremiah Denton perhaps explained the value of a robust ARS best when he stated:

"Those of us not rescued in Vietnam but fortunate enough to survive the rigors and anguish of prisoner internment know first hand the costs of inadequate combat search and rescue costs measured in human spirit, morale, lives and dollars. Difficult as it may be to project those costs precisely, it is predictable

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that the costs in possible future conflict will greatly exceed those of past wars unless actions are taken to accord a high peacetime priority to the combat search and rescue mission."<sup>25</sup>

The message is clear, CSAR is too important to get lost in parochialism, bureaucracy and budget disputes. CSAR translates directly to the saving of American lives. On that there is no price, no budget and no options.

#### AFTER ACTION ISSUES

As we began bringing home the forces deployed to the Persian Gulf, attention turned to the lessons learned in the desert and during that process the issue of CSAR became a frontrunner. The Air Force payed lipservice to the ARS for years and finally realized that CSAR was important enough that a reasonable solution must found to provide a credible rescue capability for both peacetime and war. In the Spring of 1991, the Deputy CINC, USSOCOM, sent a letter to the Air Force's Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations (XO) outlining issues that should be looked at by the Air Force with regards to CSAR. He indicated that while SOF forces deployed to the Gulf performed the CSAR mission for CENTCOM it was not without some cost. The performance of this mission was to a certain extent a detractor from the theatre CINC's SOF capability.<sup>26</sup>

As mentioned earlier, it is the SOCOM position that CSAR is a mission that is not in the mission statement for the command, requires considerable SOF assets to accomplish, and ultimately has significant impact on the readiness of the command.<sup>27</sup> SOCOM

requested Air Force assistance to staff the issue and recommend a plan to manage the resource, provide clear command and control, and assure that the required resources deployed with combat forces during a contingency. Fairly detailed study by the Air Staff revealed a number of issues that must be solved as a part of the entire CSAR study.<sup>28</sup> The argument has raged at fever pitch for the last year. What has come out thus far, have been a number of position and counter-position papers on the central issue - - - who should be the primary agency responsible for Search and Rescue (SAR) force structure, command and control, and overall planning for contingencies.

#### AIR STAFF OPTIONS

In a recent AF/XO paper completed during the summer of 1991, the Air force outlined four options for its future direction in CSAR. The first option was for the Air Force to remain the primary agency for peacetime and wartime SAR by revitalizing existing Air Rescue Service (ARS) assets and relying on Special Operations Forces for high priority, pre-planned, high threat extractions (by definition and doctrine, a SOF mission). Option two was similar in that it kept ARS as the agency for SAR but also gave ARS the entire CSAR mission. The third option was to give the entire mission to AFSOC under the command of USSOCOM. In this case, ARS assets and personnel would become a directorate within SOCOM and all funding would come from SOCOM budget accounts. Finally, the Air Staff suggested a fourth option

- - - establish a separate joint component Rescue Command.<sup>29</sup>

There are a number of pros and cons with each of these options which will be addressed but underlying any choice are several "facts of life" that will have to be addressed by the Air Force. First, the Air Force will have a force structure bill to pay no matter what the outcome. CSAR is too important an issue to the aircrews of all services, to their families, and to Congress for it to be eliminated from our nations capability.

Unfortunately, we will see a negative-growth budget from Congress for the foreseeable future and as a result, the cost of any improvement in capability for CSAR force will come at the expense of some other line item. It seems unlikely the Congress would force SOCOM to cut back their programs to accomodate an increase CSAR force modernization, so it seems the Air Force would bear the burden no matter which option is taken. This leads to a second fact. The current force structure is grossly inadequate to accomplish the mission, no matter who owns it.<sup>30</sup>

There are currently not enough aerial refueling tankers (HC-130 and MC-130 aircraft) to handle both the SOF and SAR mission. Current Air Force helicopter assets are not equipped to handle anything more then peacetime SAR and without new equipment, could not handle combat operations over any significant distance or in any threat environment. As noted previously, the vast majority of our rescue assets are old HH-3 helicopters that lack the range, Electronic Countermeasures (ECM), night capability, or self-protection necessary to do the job without unacceptable risk to

the crews.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, these assets are not "front loaded" in current deployment plans and as we saw in Desert Storm are not in a strong readiness posture. Finally, peacetime rescue requirements will not go away and missions such as NASA support, Iceland alert, range support, and PACAF search and rescue commitments will require whoever manages the mission to update force structure to support a very ambitious and necessary peacetime responsibility.

#### PROS AND CONS OF AIR STAFF OPTIONS

Let us return to the Air Staff options and look at the advantages and disadvantages of each. Under option one, the ARS would provide peacetime training and SAR support, it would conduct wartime SAR or CSAR up to medium threat from an alert status, and would assume a deployment role for contingency response. Special operators, under AFSOC or ARSOC command, would handle specialized, high priority, deep extractions of key personnel (to include downed aircrews). The advantages here are that this would support existing joint doctrine and would compel the theatre CINC to establish a JRCC to coordinate CSAR support among component RCCs; the Air Force would retain the full range of CSAR capability with interoperability being promoted between ARS and AFSOC; more efficient use of CSAR capable assets would be achieved (theatre CINCs would get dedicated CSAR resources).<sup>32</sup>

From the negative standpoint, there would be a force structure bill to pay for the necessary equipment upgrades (NVG,

FLIR, IRCM, LR Comm, etc., for existing HH-60s and HC-130s) as well as additional airframes (HH-60s and HC-130s) to meet the full range of peacetime and wartime requirements. This would also require close coordination between the Air Force and SOCOM to establish a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for training and readiness issues. This, by the way, could be as much of an advantage as a disadvantage - - - both sides on the same sheet of music.

With option two, the Air Staff looked at giving the entire responsibility for CSAR to the Air Rescue Service. They would have the unilateral mission of equipping and training for CSAR and would be the sole supplier of this capability for all Air Force operations. As with option one, this would provide dedicated USAF peacetime and wartime assets, but it would also provide a very clear chain of command - - - the Air Force would control all rescue assets. On the down side, there remains the force structure bill to pay, and in this case, it would require a deeper investment in penetration aids, airframes, and tankers to handle the wider scope of requirements. This option also assumes that theatre CINCs would accept a lesser degree of capability, leaving the possibility of repeating "lessons not learned" from Desert Storm.<sup>33</sup>

Option three would give the mission and all ARS assets to USSOCOM under AFSOC control. AFSOC would establish a rescue directorate and the force would be funded as a line item from the SOCOM budget. While indirectly the Air Force would retain



responsibility for CSAR, command and control would rest with USSOCOM. This plan would place responsibility for the entire mission under one major command, consolidate all logistic support for the MH/HH-60 and HC-130 fleet, and allow for some masking of SOF forces under the rescue flag. The disadvantages of this approach are that the mission of AFSOC would be blurred somewhat with the inclusion of CSAR, as with the others - - - a force structure bill, and finally, the potential for the SAR mission to become secondary to special operations.<sup>34</sup>

The final option the Air Staff looked at was establishing a joint component rescue command. A single, intra-service agency would be formed to accomplish all aspects of the SAR and CSAR mission. All services would transfer their assets to this single agency and the agency could be a joint sub-unified component of FORSCOM or SOCOM. This would establish a single, joint advocate for CSAR, provide for efficient use of limited assets, and provide theatre CINCs with an established joint rescue capability and command and control structure. The shortfalls would be a loss of control of CSAR assets from each service (service support without any control), an even larger bill to pay. Equipment from each of the services would require upgrading to balance and tailor assets to meet the needs of joint requirements, and all of this would require SECDEF approval to establish a new joint agency. In a time of declining dollars, the increased overhead required to operate this command would be tough to sell.<sup>35</sup>

After extensive study and discussion, the Air Staff

recommendation was to adopt Option One as the best approach to the problem.<sup>36</sup> This approach would keep CSAR capability in ARS and utilize the unique capabilities of AFSOF assets for special missions. The plan was briefed to the theatre CINCs, to Military Airlift Command (MAC), and to USSOCOM by way of a concept message in June of 1991. The plan outlined the Air Force intent to provide for dedicated, non-SOF rescue (ARS) forces capable of performing peacetime and wartime rescue up to medium threat to include long range operations. The unique assets of SOF would be required to accomplish those few missions outside the capabilities of USAF rescue forces. Thusfar, comments from the field have been favorable but with some concerns.

Both U.S. Air Forces - Europe (USAFE) and Pacific Air Forces (PACAF) Commanders expressed a concern over a lack of CSAR assets in their theatres with PACAF also interested in a solution to the tanker shortfall they currently experience.<sup>37</sup> MAC noted that projected CSAR requirements exceeded programmed capability and that additional funding would be required to support the modernization.<sup>38</sup> Additionally, peacetime mission requirements were frustrated by the current active/ reserve component tanker mix. AFSOC comments indicated an understanding that, at least for the near term, SOF are the most capable CSAR forces. AFSOC felt that continued CSAR support has a detrimental impact on overall SOF readiness but that it was the best alternative until the Air Force was able to equip and train ARS forces for long range and medium threat operations.<sup>39</sup> Finally, there seems to be a

perception among some senior Air Force leaders that there is no requirement for additional force structure; mere realignment would solve the problem. None of the arguments support this idea.

#### A COMBAT COMMAND OPTION

Analysis to this point seems to indicate CSAR and ARS are broken and without a major focus of effort by all parties the services could be on the road to rescue's version of Task Force Smith<sup>40</sup> - - - a hollow force given a mission for which it is neither adequately trained nor equipped. The key at this point is to plan a roadmap for the next ten years that will rebuild a robust and capable rescue capability and get it to the fight when and where it is needed. The previous options outlined many approaches, all with strong arguments for and against their case. There may be a further compromise position, for purposes of this paper we will call it the Air Combat Command (ACC) Option.

The solution lies in a threefold approach. First, fully man and equip the Air Rescue Service. Second, realign ARS forces with their warfighting customers - - - Air Combat Command. Third, develop a detailed Memorandum of Agreement with USSOCOM that will cover all CSAR contingencies. Let's take a look at each aspect of this proposal in more detail.

Currently, the Air Force has a buy on the books to plus up current HH-60 inventories.<sup>41</sup> This should be renegotiated to give these aircraft adequate self-defense capability to operate at night, over long range, in a threat environment characterized by

small to medium caliber AAA and IR SAMs. This would require an aircraft with in-flight refueling capacity, night vision devices (NVG/FLIR), precision navigation and personnel locator equipment (GPS/INS), and self-contained ECM and IRCM equipment. This aircraft would closely resemble the MH-60 Pave Hawk currently planned for the SOF community. An additional purchase of 4-8 Pave Hawk equivalent type airframes over those forecast would be required to provide adequate coverage of peacetime and wartime requirements. Also along the lines of equipment shortfalls are the current numbers of HC-130 tankers. ARS and AFSOC estimates show that an additional buy or conversion of 6 tankers would ease the SOF workload for peacetime support and would provide sufficient quantities of dedicated rescue tankers to support contingency operations in a major regional conflict.<sup>42</sup>

Once we have a plan to equip the force, the next dilemma is where to position the ARS for best access when needed and for best support of peacetime requirements. The Air Force is at the threshold of monumental changes in its organization and its Chief of Staff, General Merrill A. McPeak, has gone to great lengths to realign and streamline combat forces into organizations that would live, train, deploy, and fight together. Including the ARS in this process seems a logical and intelligent move. First, reposition forces from the reserve component to the active component to allow access to necessary rescue assets on a short notice. Second, move responsibility for equipping and training rescue forces to the command most interested in

employing their capability - - - Air Combat Command. This move would serve a very important purpose. It would align direct combat support assets with the warfighters. The CSAR forces should be included in the make-up of composite wings such as those planned for Pope AFB, Moody AFB, Davis-Monthan AFB, or McChord AFB, where similar maintenance support would be available. They would also be identified for deployment early in a contingency with their parent wing. Support for peacetime missions such as the Iceland alert commitment, the NASA mission and range support at Kirtland and Nellis would be filled from these home bases. Support for PACAF would be provided by a squadron assigned in theatre. With the continued drawdown in Europe, peacetime SAR would be provided from joint or combined assets assigned in theatre rather than USAF resources. Air Force CSAR units would be identified for deployment in a contingency along with their parent ACC wings. This would give us a forward deployed force for quick reaction in the Pacific during contingency operations and effective use of joint or combined SAR forces in Europe.

It seems natural that the most decorated units for valor and heroism in combat during Vietnam, that the mission awarded the highest Air Force decoration during Desert Storm, and the single most important concern of every combat aircrew should have a home in a combat command, not a mobility command.

This paper has covered, in detail, the types of equipment modernization that would be required to modernize the ARS for any

future CSAR mission. Certainly this will be a major investment and one that will have to be phased over time. The final aspect of this proposal will be key to its success namely, the role USSOCOM and AFSOC will play in CSAR. As the Air Force moves to upgrade ARS, it will be critical to enter into a detailed Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) outlining the AFSOC place in the spectrum of CSAR operations.

Wording should include provisions whereby the Air Force could rely on some short termed support with tanker support for peacetime SAR commitments and some amount of wartime support in the near-term while ARS comes up to speed and AFSOC could find a fertile breeding ground for the maturing of potential SOF crews as they "grow up" in the CSAR business. Eventually, the AFSOC role in CSAR would be exactly that outlined in joint publications - - - that of specialized, deep extraction requiring special planning.

#### SUMMARY

The political cost of ignoring this issue much longer may be the highest price to pay. As we reduce our military presence overseas, cut back our standing military in the CONUS to the lowest levels since the '50s, all the while maintaining that we will never again endure the embarrassment of a Desert One or worse, we must have the most highly capable force our dollars can buy. Failure to field the best possible means to recover downed aircrew in peace and in war would undermine the many lives that

have been lost over the years and leave warriors in the future asking why.

This paper has shown the merit in the various options for improvement of our CSAR forces. It looked at the difficulties each of the players see in making changes but it also showed the importance of moving forward with urgency to solve a tough problem. While the Air Staff evaluation outlined the various options to pursue quite clearly and offered a compelling case for their choice, this paper asserts that the Air Staff study stopped short of closure. The Air Combat Command option completes the package. It drives the Air Force to continue force modernization, clearly define traditional and special operations SAR roles and responsibilities, and finally, position these invigorated forces where they are most closely aligned with maintenance support, command and control, and combat partners.

In a speech to the Air Force Association's National Convention in September 1991, Air Force Chief of Staff, General Merrill A. McPeak, outlined his vision to "Organize, Train, and Equip" our future Air Force. He indicated his reluctance to preside over the " . . . decline of the Air Force . . . " and the need to " . . . streamline and flatten . . . consolidate, where practical to do so . . . and clarify functional responsibilities to untangle some staff responsibilities that have become obscure over the years."<sup>43</sup>

Certainly, there are not many issues more clouded or obscure than combat search and rescue. The Air Force vision for tomorrow

is one of consolidation, one of clarification, one of smaller but vibrant forces, capable of " Global Reach . . . Global Power ". Adoption of the Air Combat Command Option for CSAR fits this vision to perfection. It meets each of the tenets of aerospace power<sup>44</sup> and provides a tailored force capable meeting the challenges that face 21st century air commanders.

1. LTC Stanley L. Bushboom, USAF, Bat 21: A Case Study (Military Studies Project, U.S.Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA 1990, p.1.

2. Ibid., pp. 28-29.



3. Interview with LTC Gordan Ettenson, J-5 Office, United States Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, FL., 12 November 1991.
4. CAPT Edward B. Westerman, USAF, "Air Rescue Service: A Direction for the Twenty First Century?" Airpower, Fall 1990, p.62.
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. The Pave Low III helicopter is an improved HH-53 that is specifically designed to penetrate enemy defense and is currently in use in special operations. The Pave Low is modified with state of the art navigation and night vision equipment. It is aerial refuelable and is armed with a .50 caliber machine gun.
9. CMDR J.W. Mullarky, USN, Combat Search and Rescue: The CINC's Dilemma, (Military Studies Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1990), p.6.
10. CMDR J.W. Mullarky, USN, Combat Search and Rescue: The CINC's Dilemma, (Military Studies Project, U.S. Army War College, Carlisle Barracks, PA, 1990), p.6.
11. Westerman, p.61.
12. The Air Force Association, Air Force Magazine, "1991 Air Force Almanac", May 1991.
13. Mullarky, p.6-7.
14. LTC Stephen J. Mott, USAF, "DESERT STORM: OSD Policy Level Review", 13 June 1991, (United States Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, FL), p.1.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
17. Ibid.
18. USAF WHITE PAPER, "Combat Rescue-Bridging the Gap", August 1991, (United States Air Force Special Operations Command, Hurlburt Field, FL), p.9.
19. MAJ Lyle Koenig, USAF, "Point Paper on Desert Shield CSAR Command and Control", 2 November 1990, (SECRET).
20. CONCEPT OF OPERATIONS FOR COMBAT SEARCH AND RESCUE (CSAR), Aerial Rescue Service Briefing, undated, Washington, DC.

21. Holliway, p.2.
22. Mullarky, pp.12-13.
23. Malcolm McConnell, Into the Mouth of the Cat, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1985), p.108.
24. Mullarky, p.11.
25. Mullarky, p.15.
26. MG Donald Snyder, USAF, "Combat Search and Rescue (CSAR)", 24 April 1991, Letter to Headquarters, United States Air Force (SECRET), (United States Special Operations Command, MacDill AFB, FL), p.2.
27. Holliway, p.2-3.
28. CONCEPT BRIEFING, pp.9-13.
29. Ibid.
30. Hq USAF/XOXFL. Rescue Force Structure Plan, 22 September 1989.
31. CMDR J.W. Mullarky, USN, " Search and Rescue: Everybody's Problem," Air Land Bulletin, TAC-TRADOC ALFA, Bulletin No. 90-4, 31 December 1990.
32. CONCEPT Briefing, pp.9-13.
33. Ibid.
34. Ibid.
35. USAF WHITE PAPER, p.8.
36. CONCEPT Briefing, p.15.
37. CINCPAC Message DTG 160235Z May 91, HC-130 Tanker Requirements, p.1-2.
38. HqUSAF Point Paper, USAF/XOOTA, "CSAR Status Brief", pp.2-3.
39. USAF WHITE PAPER, p.4-8.
40. Task Force Smith refers to a poorly equipped, poorly trained unit sent to Korea. It has become an euphamism for the low point in U.S.Army readiness over recent years and has become a rallying cry for current Army Chief of Staff, General Gordon R. Sullivan.
41. FY '92-97 Defense Plan.

42. CONCEPT Briefing, p.13.

43. GEN Merrill A. McPeak, " Organize, Train, and Equip", Air Force Association National Convention. 18 September 1991. A Speech. pp. 4-6.

44. Air Force Manual 1-1, Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force, November 1991. p.8.

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